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The President's Daily Brief

7 December 1970

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Top Secret

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Communists are renewing their efforts to drive Lao government forces from the Bolovens Plateau. *(Page 1)*

The Soviet naval task group is moving toward Cuba. *(Page 2)*

Fedayeen distrust of the government is disrupting the quiet in Jordan. *(Page 3)*

On *Page 4*, we discuss some possible effects of the Polish - West German treaty on Polish-Vatican relations.

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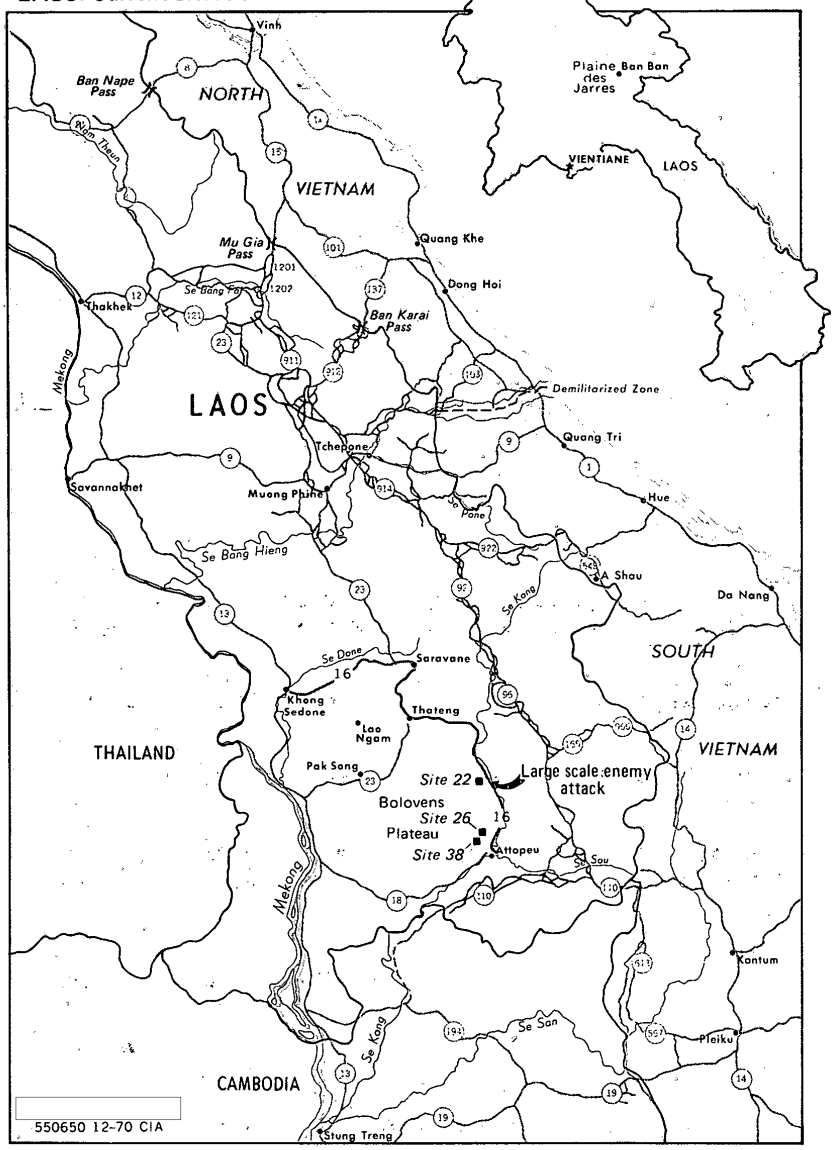
LAOS: Current Situation



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LAOS

Site 22, the last major government base on the eastern rim of the Bolovens Plateau, was attacked on 5 December by a North Vietnamese force estimated at one to three battalions. Heavy fighting at the site persisted throughout the weekend but tapered off this morning with the position still in government hands, although enemy units remain nearby. Enemy activity was also reported during the weekend around several smaller government sites, and one camp was abandoned.

The Communist campaign in the eastern Bolovens, which began during the summer, picked up again two weeks ago when the enemy successfully attacked two key government bases, Sites 26 and 38. This area of the plateau commands the Se Kong River and Route 16 which have taken on increased importance for the Communists this year--especially during the present dry season--as they try to expand their infiltration complex through southern Laos.

Communist activity also appears to have stepped up along the northern Bolovens. The three battalions of government irregulars that have been sweeping to the north of Pak Song reported contacts with the enemy over the weekend near Thateng.

There have been several reports of large enemy forces moving into the area southwest of Saravane. Recent enemy intercepts indicate that most of the North Vietnamese 9th Regiment has moved south from Muong Phine in the last month and is now between Thateng and Lao Ngam. Low-level reports claim that these forces will attack Pak Song in the near future, but they could also strike at targets to the west along Route 16, perhaps around Khong Sedone where the enemy appears to have been moving large quantities of ammunition.

In northern Laos, government forces east of the Plaine des Jarres are still moving toward Ban Ban without significant resistance. On the Plaine's western perimeter, no important fighting has been reported in recent days.

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USSR-CUBA

The Soviet naval task group composed of a guided-missile frigate, an F-class diesel submarine, a submarine tender, and an oiler is headed toward Cuba. The latest position reports place the task group about 180 nautical miles north of Haiti.

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The two naval TU-95 reconnaissance aircraft that flew to Cuba from the northwestern USSR on 3 December are still in Havana.

The Soviet ships are too far at sea to reach either Havana or Cienfuegos today, as announced by Havana Radio, but they could arrive on Tuesday.

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JORDAN

The fedayeen have walked out of the Arab peacekeeping committee as new clashes have erupted in northern Jordan. The walkout by the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) occurred on Saturday while the PLO Central Committee charged separately that the Jordanian Army was preparing to attack the fedayeen in the northern cities of Jarash and Irbid. There are press reports, however, that the fedayeen are asking the truce committee chairman, former Tunisian premier Bahi Ladgham, to return to Jordan from a holiday.

The origin of the weekend clashes is not fully clear. [redacted] 50X1

Intermittent but heavy fighting continued in Jarash yesterday until evening [redacted] 50X1 50X1

This is the first time during the tenuous truce that clashes between the fedayeen and the army have continued into a second day. Until now, the peacekeeping committee has been generally effective in cooling off local incidents before they could spread, but fedayeen indiscipline and distrust of the Jordanian Army's intentions have been growing, particularly with King Husayn's absence. With the fedayeen out of the truce mechanism, incidents could well increase in number and in severity. There are indications that today's fighting may be heavier.

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POLAND - VATICAN - WEST GERMANY

Bonn's Ostpolitik has ever-widening ramifications. The successful negotiation of the Polish - West German treaty opens the possibility that Poland and the Vatican can settle the vexing question of ecclesiastical administration of German territory ceded to Poland following World War II. The Vatican has held that in the absence of a peace treaty it cannot give de jure recognition to Polish church administration of dioceses in western Poland; these dioceses have been run by apostolic administrators who report directly to Rome.

Within the past year, however, the Holy See has indicated that an "international agreement" between Poland and West Germany might be a sufficient precondition for it to change its attitude. We think the Vatican would require that the treaty be ratified first, but two recent events suggest a thaw in Polish-Vatican relations.

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